

Shared Life

The Monthly Newsletter of Old First Presbyterian Church

December 2013

Church Website: oldfirst.org

Church Photostream: www.flickr.com/photos/oldfirst

Old First Concerts: www.oldfirstconcerts.org

MAGGI'S MUSINGS

December 1 is the First Sunday of Advent, which marks the beginning Christian new year. Advent (from Latin for “coming” or “arrival”), is a four week season before Christmas and its twelve days. Advent is a time of anticipation, reflection, and getting ready both for Jesus' Birth – for God's incarnation into the world on Christmas – and for Christ's return. Mark Roberts reminds us that Advent includes the following themes: “Waiting; Expectation; Hope; Yearning; Our need for a Savior.” Christians remember the Jewish yearning for the advent of a messiah and also look with hope for the Messiah's second advent.

At Old First Presbyterian Church we have been planning, working and praying that Advent will be a time in which our faith is deepened and our hope renewed. Worship will offer this through art, music and word. Read about all of the opportunities for you to let God work a new thing in you this year:

- The revived ancient practice of **prayer stations** will be available in the church. A prayer station is a place to engage all the senses in meditation, reflection and prayer. Each week there will a new theme, a new experience for all ages. This is an experiential form of prayer and therefore hard to explain, but here goes... Each station will have scripture, a guide for mediation, items to help focus and open your mind and heart, and an opportunity to reflect. Duplicate stations will be found in the narthex and chapel. You're invited to use them before, during and after the service or whenever you might be in the church during the week. You're invited to try it each week and see how your Advent time may be enriched.
- *A World Awaits: Daily Reflection for Advent from the Works of C.S. Lewis*, an Advent devotional in print will be available in the narthex or from the ushers beginning on Sunday, December 1. If you are unable to come to church contact the church office and ask for one to be sent to you.
- There is also a great on-line Advent devotional called *Following the Star*. You can find it on the web at www.d365.org. This series, which features scripture, prayer, and meditative thoughts about Christ coming again into our world, will run from December 2 through January 6 – the Epiphany – in 2014.
- Finally, make your shopping a discipline in compassion. Take time to reflect on the cuts to the SNAP/food stamp programs, knowing that half of those affected are children. As you purchase these items and as you put them in the food barrel in the Narthex for the S.F. Food Bank, pray for those who have less and see if this persistent prayer might lead you to action: to get on line, to write to those in power to make sure all of God's children are fed.
 - 1st Sunday the 1st Cereal or oatmeal
 - 2nd Sunday the 8th Canned meat, tuna or chicken
 - 3rd Sunday 15th Healthy snacks: granola bars, nuts, or trail mix
 - 4th Sunday 22th Beef or Turkey Chili (low sodium)
 - December 29th Any kind of food items
 - Jan 5th Epiphany, Food items for infants

May this Advent Season lead us all to a deeper and renewed walk on the Jesus way.

Peace, Pastor Maggi

CHURCH LIBRARY RESOURCES FOR ADVENT

The library of Old First Presbyterian Church contains many resources that can add to our understanding and appreciation of the season of Advent. They range from general and specialized commentaries that provide background and insight for familiar Biblical texts to books and recordings of art, music and prayer. The following is a sampling of the library's collections of note for Advent:

Bible Commentaries

The library contains several sets of commentaries that can help you understand biblical texts. The more accessible commentary is called Interpretation and includes useful discussion and explanations of biblical texts. Likewise, the Interpreters' Bible and Oxford Annotated Bible are good resources. A much more detailed and technical resource can be found in the Anchor Bible.

***The Birth of the Messiah* by Raymond Brown (226.2 BRO)**

A volume of the Anchor Bible Resource Library, this book contains an essay on the history of the birth narratives, along with discussion of each source and a verse-by-verse commentary of the accounts of Matthew and Luke.

***Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (226.03 GRE)**

In this volume is a 14 page article that covers the nature of the birth narratives and the theology and details related to Jesus' birth.

***The Story of Jesus* (246 REA)**

This book is a telling of the story of the life of Jesus, including the birth narrative, profusely illustrated by reproductions of great art of many periods and nations.

A Medieval Christmas

This book, produced in association with the British Library, tells the story of Christ's birth with reproductions of exquisite medieval illuminated manuscripts.

***Advent Readings from Iona* (242.33 WO)**

This is a book of Advent readings prepared for use by the Iona community in Scotland.

Carols from King's

This DVD is a recording of the famous Christmas Eve Service of Nine Lessons and Carols from the chapel of King's College, Cambridge University.

You are invited to visit Old First Presbyterian Church's library to see these and other items in the collection. Steve Taber would be happy to assist you in finding what you are looking for.

ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CONTINUES IN ADVENT

Isaiah in Advent, with David Althuler, December 1 and 8

Old First Presbyterian Church our seminary intern, David Althuler, will be offering two classes on the first two Sundays of Advent, December 1 and 8. The classes will explore biblical passages from the first century Jewish perspective. In the first class, we will explore Isaiah 11:1-10; in the second class, Isaiah 7:10-16. Come, hear our intern and learn together with him more about how we understand Isaiah. The classes will be held in the Munro Room at 9:30 am.

Cuba Today: Some Personal Observations with Slides, with George Yu, December 15

During an eight-day People-to-People visit to Cuba in November 2013, sanctioned by the US Dept. of Treasury and organized by the Road Scholar Program, Elderhostel, Inc., we visited five Cuban cities and other sites, including Havana, Cienfuegos, Managua, Santa Clara and Trinidad. The visit included lively interactions at senior centers, exchanges with local families at their homes, attending lectures followed by Q and A sessions on Cuban-American foreign relations, religions in Cuba, efforts to preserve and restore Cuban historical buildings and other subjects, visits to Hemingway's former home, Cuban educational and cultural institutions and children's centers. Personal impressions and observations will be presented on the various activities and the overall visit. George's presentation will be held on Sunday, December 15, 9:30 am, in the Munro Room.

PAUL TILlich'S A HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT, CHAPTER 1

I've been meaning to read Paul Tillich's *A History of Christian Thought* for over a year now, and I finally got started this week. No telling how much headway I'll make, but my intentions are good. This brief article contains my initial observations about the beginning of Tillich's book that you might find interesting.

Tillich was and still is considered by many people one of the most important existential philosophers and theologians of the 20th Century. In the first chapter of his book he points out that Jesus came at a very specific moment in time. But that moment in time was preceded by what he calls a "preparation for Christian theology," which in part was the Greek philosophy of the Skeptics, the Platonists, the Neo-Platonists, the Epicureans, and others. Therefore, concepts that many of us think are entirely Christian were already present in the philosophical schools and culture of ancient Greece. The Greek philosophical schools were considered not only educational but also religious communities. They were "half-ritual and half-philosophical in character." The members of these schools lived according to doctrine and submitted to "inspired men." So, the concept of an inspired leader or master was already present in the culture. In addition, these philosopher/leaders were commonly called "saviors" because through their philosophic teachings, followers found relief from the anxiety of human existence. The Platonists contributed the concept of providence to Christianity. Plato had developed the concept and it too was an "attempt to overcome the anxiety of fate and death in the ancient world." The chapter continues with the influences of the Stoics, the Eclectics, and the mystery religions on Christianity. If anyone is interested in tackling this book with me, please let me know and maybe we can share what we think about it.

As a final note, if you like theology and are interested in a good survey of the significant theologians of the 20th century, I recommend *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* by Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson. The authors summarize and critique the likes of Kant, Schleiermacher, Barth, Bultmann, Tillich, and more. It's a nice reference to have around.

–David Altshuler, Seminary Inter
david@oldfirst.org

THE WELCOME MINISTRY

Maggi remembers that when she came to Old First Presbyterian Church seven years ago there were people sleeping in front of the church every night. Due to committed work and the passion of the Welcome Ministry, many of those to whom our sidewalks was home, are now housed inside. The Welcome Saturday meals were a vital part of that transformation. Welcome: A Communal Response to Poverty, is now seeking new and different ways of meeting the needs of the most vulnerable of those in our city and to that end and after 17 years they will stop holding Saturday Community Dinners at Old First at the end of December 2013. Welcome will still be a vital presence in San Francisco. You can read more about where their mission is leading them on their website: www.welcomeministry.org.

In response to Welcome's seeking a new direction, the Session of Old First Presbyterian Church committed to providing one meal a month, on the fourth Saturday, for a six month period from January to June of 2014. A task force has been formed to work during this time to seek out how we model Christ's hospitality and feed body and soul in the community. Serving on the task force are Michael Berg, Pam Byers, Bill Feister and Sally Spencer. There are looking for a few more people to serve on this short term task force. Please speak to them if you are interested. The task force will gather input from the congregation, volunteers, and guests to assess the possibility of continuing the meals in some form beyond June 2014. The session sees this change as an opportunity for us to explore where the passions and interests of Old First and needs of the community will be in 2014! The church seeks volunteers to help cook, serve, and host the meals during this time of evaluation. If you are interested in helping please contact Old First Presbyterian Church at saturdaymeals@oldfirst.org.

PRESBYTERIANS ENGAGE IN SNAP/FOOD STAMP CHALLENGE, AIM TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF HUNGER IN UNITED STATES

Cathy Coons has been passionate about fighting hunger since she was a teenager in Westchester County, NY. It was there that she first joined in a fast to raise money for Save the Children, the well-known charitable organization for children in need in the United States and around the world.

Since moving to Greensboro, NC, in 2004, Coons has continued to take part in a variety of volunteer initiatives to alleviate hunger and poverty, primarily through Starmount Presbyterian Church, where — as a member of the mission committee — she is actively involved in such local ministries as senior meals, refugee resettlement, backpack feeding programs, the church’s community garden, and Family Promise, to name just a few.

But she has never again attempted to experience first-hand the pain of hunger, at least not until now. Coons said that when Starmount’s mission committee recently approved the church’s participation in the Presbyterian Church (USA)’s SNAP/Food Stamp Challenge, November 17-23 — in which families and individuals pledge to use the average food stamp benefit as their total budget for groceries for seven days — she said there were few takers. “Since I volunteer with working poor families who live on SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) funds every day,” said Coons, “I thought I would give it a try.” She said that she had no specific expectations, except that she would be hungry. “For the past ten years I have been reluctant to identify with those struggling with hunger by fasting or doing without,” Coons said. “The reason I came to feel that way is because of my interactions with those who deal with food insecurity. Whenever I have spoken with them about fasts or other deprivation programs, they don’t always understand why someone would do this.”

Ruth Farrell, coordinator of the national Presbyterian Hunger Program, explains that the SNAP/Food Stamp Challenge is a discipline to draw attention to the gross injustice of poverty and hunger in the U.S. and to open new opportunities for education, understanding, compassion and solidarity. “This challenge is not only a call to hunger and poverty awareness, but also a call to action,” Farrell said. “We are called by God to be in the world and to seek to make it a better place. Changing hearts and minds is the starting point of building a movement and improving policy.”

Members of the key leadership bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) — including Linda Valentine, executive director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency — will also be taking part in the challenge. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), based in Louisville, Ky., comprises more than 1.9 million members in more than 11,000 congregations, answering Christ’s call to mission and ministry throughout the United States and the world. “By joining in the SNAP/Food Stamp Challenge — and intentionally living within these allowances together — we pray that awareness will be raised, consciences stirred, and actions taken so that all people have access to life’s basic necessities,” said Valentine.

Kevin Kattmann, who chairs Starmount’s mission committee, said that hunger can be hard to understand. “The media report how many people in the U.S. go hungry every day,” Kattmann said. “Then the next night they will report how obesity is fast becoming the number one health challenge in the country. Hunger here doesn’t look like hunger in other countries.”

As Kattmann, Coons, and other Starmount members prepare to spend only \$4.39 per person per day on everything that they eat in the coming week, Kattmann said that most people don’t think it is really that hard. “No better way to know that than to try,” he said. Starmount’s pastor, John Odom, will also be joining the challenge.

Emily Enders Odom, News & Record, Greensboro, NC, republished with permission

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING TO BE COLLECTED DECEMBER 22

Each year on the Sunday before Christmas, Presbyterians everywhere bring our Christmas Joy Offering, to express profound appreciation for our clergy and other servants of the Church. We honor our church leaders both for their faithfulness in tending to our spiritual needs and in recognition of their decision, in many cases, to answer the call to ministry rather than pursue a life of material comfort.

The Christmas Joy Offering provides a way to give thanks, and much-needed support, to eligible PC(USA) active and retired church workers and their families who are struggling with urgent financial needs, and income and housing supplements to qualifying retired church workers and their families. It also sponsors grants for vocational training of clergy. It's a wonderful opportunity for those who have been blessed with the means to express their generosity and, at the same time, support important needs in the PC(USA) community.

Last year, the Christmas Joy Offering provided a generous \$1.9 million to the Assistance Program. As a result, the Assistance Program helped to provide 1,250 grants to Presbyterian church servants and their families. This Program receives half the Joy Offering, and depends on the Offering and other gifts from caring Presbyterians to fund its programs.

A Presbyterian tradition for nearly 70 years, the Christmas Joy Offering gives vital funding to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions as well as to Presbyterian-related racial-ethnic schools and colleges. It is one of the four special offerings designated by the PC(USA) General Assembly to provide congregations direct ways to support those in need. Learn more at www.pcusa.org.

RECENT OFFERINGS

Old First Presbyterian Church has recently contributed to two important offerings: We collected \$1,478 for the Peacemaking Offering, one of the four denomination-wide offerings of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and we collected \$265 for a special offering to help the Philippines through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

COLUMBARIUM UPDATE

On All Saints' Sunday, November 3, members of the Columbarium Society of Old First Presbyterian Church gathered in the library for their annual meeting. The Columbarium Ministry Team reported that in 2013 the ashes of two church members, Evelyn Molberg and Helen Myhree (Kennedy), were deposited in their niches, with remembrance services led by Pastor Maggi for their family and friends. Memorial plaques have been inscribed for Mary MacWilliam and Mary Gill.

Interest in the Columbarium remains strong, with three niches and two plaques purchased in 2013, bringing the totals to twenty-eight niches and thirteen memorial plaques subscribed to date. The Columbarium Fund continues to repay the amount owed to the church for final construction costs. We were able to repay nearly half of the remaining balance this year and look forward to retiring this debt in the near future.

Finally, an offer in 2013 by Old First Presbyterian Church member Steve Taber to place a piece of art on indefinite loan to the church was approved by our session, and this piece—an Ethiopian liturgical cross—was installed in the north tympanum (the semicircular space on the upper wall) of the Columbarium. We thank Steve for this enhancement to the Columbarium space.

Membership in the Columbarium Society is open to all those who hold niches or plaques in the Columbarium. If you would like to receive an information packet about niche or plaque ownership, please request one from the church office or speak with a member of the ministry team.

—the Columbarium Ministry Team

GIVE A CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR A HOMELESS YOUNG PERSON

Bring a Christmas gift to church and help Larkin Street Youth Services brighten the holidays for over 450 young people staying Larkin Street's emergency shelters and transitional living facilities or accessing Larkin Street's Drop In Center and programs.

Gifts do not need to be expensive. Everyday items are much needed. All gifts must be *new and unwrapped*. Some items on the young people's wish lists this year:

Gifts	Personal Care Items	Cothing/Household
MP3 players	Toothbrushes/toothpaste	Ponchos/umbrellas
Headphones	Deodorant	Jackets
Bike helmets	Sewing kits	Hooded sweatshirts
Backpacks	Makeup kits/shaving cream	Socks/underwear
Gift cards	Brushes/combs	Shoes/sneakers
Muni tokens/BART passes	Beauty products	Alarm clocks
Purses/wallets	Hair dryers	Dishes/pots/pans
2014 day planners/journals	Shampoo/conditioner/lotions	Towel sets

The Mission Fair on **Sunday, December 1**, is a great time to bring a gift, or you can drop a gift off at Old First the following **Sunday, December 8**. Look for the Larkin Street Christmas gift box or Bill or Marilyn Campbell at the coffee hour. (You can also take gifts to Larkin Street's Drop In Center at 1138 Sutter Street (Larkin/Polk) through *Friday, December 13*.)

Larkin Street offers innovative and comprehensive services that give homeless and at-risk youth ages 12-24 the tools they need to reclaim their lives and become self-sufficient adults. Three out of four youth who complete Larkin Street's comprehensive program escape the street.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mission Fair, December 1

Old First Presbyterian Church, through its Mission budget, is proud to support the fine work accomplished by some very effective organizations – locally, nationally and internationally. The local organizations are invited to participate in our annual Mission Fair on Sunday, December 1: Covenant Network of Presbyterians, Ecumenical House at SF State, SF Food Bank, Larkin Street Youth Services, SafeHouse (formerly Network Ministries), SF Night Ministry, SF General Sojourn Chaplaincy, Temenos, and Welcome. Two new organizations will be represented at the festivities: information about Oiko Credit, “a worldwide financial cooperative that empowers disadvantaged people with credit” will be presented by former Old First Presbyterian Church Pastor Roger Hull; and ceramic items from Palestine will be offered by Walt Davis, a retired SFTS professor. Also represented will be Old First Presbyterian Church's Choir, the Deacons, the Doris Kraus Senior Center, and our ever-popular Fair Trade products.

For the Christmas Potluck, the church will supply both turkey and ham as main courses. You can supply the side dishes, salads and desserts. Of course for those of you who don't cook, a small donation will gain you entry into the holiday feast.

World AIDS Day, December 1

Giving Voice to the Here and Now, a service for remembering World AIDS Day 2013, will be held 7:00 pm on December 1 at Saint Mark's Lutheran Church, 1111 O'Farrell Street between Franklin and Gough Streets. The annual service is sponsored by Saint Mark's Lutheran Church, the SF Interfaith Council and the United Religions Initiative.

Interfaith Food Pantry, December 7

On Saturday, December 7, the Interfaith Food Pantry will be staffed by volunteers from all the participating churches. Some volunteers will be needed to work represent Old First Presbyterian Church. Please contact Dana Nojima in order to help: foodpantry@oldfirst.org.

Choir Retreat, December 7

The Old First Presbyterian Choir will meet for a retreat on Saturday, December 7, at 10:00 am.

Greening the Sanctuary, December 7

Join the Worship Committee on Saturday, December 7, at 12:00 noon to help decorate the sanctuary for Advent and the Christmas Season.

Maggi Henderson's 25th Anniversary of Ordination, December 8

The Reverend Maggi Henderson, pastor of Old First Presbyterian Church, was ordained on December 4, 1988. So we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of her ordination this year. Since the actual date falls between two Sundays, our festivities will follow worship on Sunday, December 8. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend! The Guest preacher for the day will be the Reverend Mary Lynn Tobin, who has known Maggi since her college days.

- **Scrapbook:** Among other things, we'll give Maggi a scrapbook of notes, cards, photos, blessings, and thanks. If you'd like to send your good wishes (and we hope you will! – please either give or send them to Pam Byers, 180 Lippard Ave, SF 94131, or pambyers.sf@gmail.com, by Monday, December 2. Thank you!
- **“Socks for Maggi:”** As a further part of our celebration of the 25th anniversary of Pastor Maggi's ordination, she has asked members of Old First Presbyterian Church to bring clean white socks to the party, which can then be given to the guests at our Saturday Community Dinners. Thanks, again!

Night Ministry Celebrates 50 Years of Service, December 14

The San Francisco Night Ministry is celebrating 50 years of service to those in distress in the night. A holiday brunch and concert benefiting the Night Ministry will be held on Saturday, December 14, at First Congregational Church, 1300 Polk Street at the corner of Bush Street. The Concert will be from 11:00 - 12:30, followed by the Champagne Brunch. Concert performers include:

The Bethany Ensemble, Ambassadors For Change, Bishop Yvette Flunder, The Phoenix Choir,

The DulTones, Curran Reichert, Kalavaria Youth Choir, La'au 'Ole 'Ola Samoan Youth Choir

The Night Ministry invites you to join the celebration. Tickets are \$30 or two for \$50. Please see Barry Claggett for tickets or email him at barryclaggett@yahoo.com.

Worship for Christmas and the New Year

Tuesday, December 24 Christmas Eve 8:00 pm

Christmas Carols and Candle Light

Sunday, December 29 Sunday after Christmas 11:00 am

Hymn-Sing and Story-Telling

Sunday, January 5 Sunday before Epiphany 11:00 am

You know the old joke: If there would have been wise women Jesus would have gotten-diapers, onesies and a casserole! You be the wise men and women. Bring a gift for an infant in need.

These items will be given to a local ministry serving the needs of children in San Francisco.

Church Office Hours for Christmas and New Year

The church office will be closed from 12:00 noon on December 24 through December 25. The office closes again from 12:00 noon on December 31 through January 1.

REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY: THE SUNDAYS IN OCTOBER, 2013

Date	Day	1 st Reading	Psalm	2 nd Reading	Gospel Reading
Dec 01	Advent 1	Isaiah 2:1-5	122	Romans 13:11-14	Matt. 24:36-44
Dec 08	Advent 2	Isaiah 11:1-10	72:1-7, 18-19	Romans 15:4-13	Matt. 3:1-12
Dec 15	Advent 3	Isaiah 35:1-10	146:5-10 or Luke 1:46-55	James 5:7-10	Matt. 11:2-11
Dec 22	Advent 4	Isaiah 7:10-16	80:1-7, 17-19	Romans 1:1-7	Matt. 1:18-25
Dec 24	Christmas Eve	Isaiah 9:2-7	96	Titus 2:11-14	Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)
Dec 25	Christmas Day	Isaiah 52:7-10	98	Hebrews 1:1-4, (5-12)	John 1:1-14
Dec 29	Christmas 1	Isaiah 63:7-9	148	Hebrews 2:10-18	Matt 2:13-23

OTHER DATES TO NOTE

Sunday	Dec 01	Mission Fair and Potluck, Fellowship Hall
Saturday	Dec 07	Interfaith Food Pantry, Staffed by All Faiths
Saturday	Dec 07	Greening of the Sanctuary, 12:00 noon
Sunday	Dec 08	Celebration of Pastor Maggi's 25 th Anniversary of Ordination
Sunday	Dec 08	Deacons' Meeting, 12:45 pm, Munro Room
Saturday	Dec 14	Community Dinner, 5:30 pm, Fellowship Hall
Saturday	Dec 21	Presbyterian Women, 12:00 noon
Tuesday	Dec 24	Church Office Closes at 12:00 noon
Tuesday	Dec 24	Christmas Eve Worship, Sanctuary, 8:00 pm
Wednesday	Dec 25	Christmas Day, Church Office Closed
Saturday	Dec 28	Community Dinner, 5:30 pm, Fellowship Hall
Tuesday	Dec 31	Church Office Closes at 12:00 noon

The Officers of Old First Presbyterian Church

Session

George Becker, Personnel; Michael Berg, Mission and Giving; Chris Burt, Worship; Pam Byers, Community-Building; Barry Clagett, Finance; Bill Feister, Christian Education; Gregory Free, Treasurer; Jeanne Kirkwood, Clerk of Session; Jean Olson, Mission and Giving; Mary Russell, Mission and Giving; Randy Smith, Planning; Sally Spencer, At-Large; Steve Taber, Operations; Betty Voris, Community-Building; Priscilla Yu, Christian Education

Board of Deacons

Nina Berg, Carol Carter, Samuel Cheng, Joy Crosser, Craig Kehne, Diane Lewis, Dana Nojima, Leota Parker, Glen Potter, AnnieScott Rogers, Sarah Taber, Hornghsheng Tu